

The Warawara: Soaring through the blue skies



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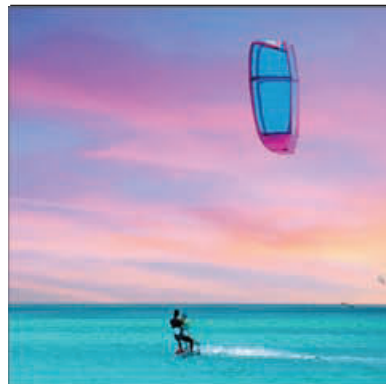
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U.S. Fed chair nominee says will not be controlled by Trump

Washington, United States

Donald Trump's choice to lead the US Federal Reserve, Kevin Warsh, stressed Tuesday that he would not be controlled by the president as he fielded questions on his assets and central bank independence during his confirmation hearing.

Warsh, a former Fed governor, was quick to emphasize his commitment to "ensuring that the conduct of monetary policy remains strictly independent."

He added that he would "absolutely not" be Trump's puppet -- an accusation some critics have lobbed at him amid the president's intense pressure on the Fed to cut interest rates.

"The president never asked me to predetermine, commit, fix, decide on any interest rate decision in any of our discussions, nor would I ever agree to do so," Warsh said.

He also took aim at the Fed for missing its inflation



Kevin Warsh, nominee for U.S. Federal Reserve Chair, testifies during a Senate Banking Committee hearing on his nomination on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, on April 21, 2026.

target since the Covid-19 pandemic, warning that inflation becomes tougher to curb once it takes hold.

The occasionally tense hearing before the Senate Banking Committee marks a key hurdle Warsh must overcome to succeed Fed

Chair Jerome Powell when his term ends on May 15.

Trump, since his return to office last year, has severely criticized Powell for not slashing rates more aggressively.

The president told CNBC on Tuesday he would be dis-

appointed if the new Fed chair did not swiftly lower rates, and again took aim at Powell over costly renovations at the bank's headquarters.

Warsh insisted that it is up to the Fed itself to stay free from political influence.

"I do not believe that independence of monetary policy is threatened when elected officials state their views on rates," he said.

- Impasse? -

All 11 Democrats on the Banking Committee last week urged for a delay in Warsh's nomination proceedings until separate investigations into Powell and Fed governor Lisa Cook are closed.

Republican Senator Thom Tillis, who sits on the panel led by his party, has also vowed to block all Fed nominees including Warsh until the Justice Department probe involving Powell is resolved.

Tillis urged Tuesday for the investigation on Powell to be dropped, saying that renovation cost overruns it probed appeared legitimate.

With 13 Republicans on the 24-member committee, Tillis' vote against Warsh's confirmation could set up an impasse. □

Third lawmaker quits as wave of scandal swamps U.S. Congress

Washington, United States

A Democratic lawmaker resigned Tuesday, becoming the third member of

the U.S. House of Representatives to step down in just over a week as a wave of ethics scandals engulfs

Congress.

Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick of Florida announced her immediate resignation ahead of a scheduled disciplinary hearing by the House Ethics Committee, which had been weighing potential sanctions over a string of campaign finance violations.

Her departure follows the resignations of Democrat Eric Swalwell and Republican Tony Gonzales, who stepped down amid separate sexual misconduct allegations, fueling a rare bipartisan reckoning over lawmakers' treatment of staff in Congress.

Cherfilus-McCormick had been accused of diverting

millions of dollars in federal disaster funds for political purposes and is facing a federal criminal case. She denies wrongdoing and has pleaded not guilty.

In a statement, she denounced the process as unfair, saying the Ethics Committee "refused my new attorney's reasonable request for time to prepare my defense" and describing the proceedings as "a witch hunt."

"I simply cannot stand by and allow my due process rights to be trampled on, and my good name to be tarnished," she said, adding that she would focus on fighting for her commu-

nity outside Congress.

The Ethics Committee had found Cherfilus-McCormick responsible for 25 violations, citing the scale and persistence of the alleged conduct.

The spate of cases has shaken a narrowly divided House, where pressure has mounted on leaders of both parties to enforce ethical standards even as political calculations complicate disciplinary action. Democratic Virginia Congressman Suhas Subramanyam, a member of the Ethics Committee, said the wave of scandal and trio of resignations was "not a good message" to send to the American people. □



U.S. Representative Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick, Democrat from Florida, appears for a hearing of the House Ethics Committee on Capitol Hill on March 26, 2026 in Washington, DC.

Bill White, Trump-channelling U.S. envoy to Belgium

Brussels, Belgium

A New Yorker with a taste for superlatives and, like his boss, for flashing thumbs-ups to the cameras, US ambassador to Belgium Bill White lives and breathes Donald Trump's MAGA-style brand of diplomacy. The 59-year-old envoy -- who boasts a relationship with Trump reaching back three decades -- sums up his mission in simple terms: "To get an A plus" from the president. "President Trump, when I was talking to him about how much I loved him, I said, 'I really want to make you happy,'" he told AFP in an interview in the Belgian capital.

"He laughed, and he said, 'Bring back \$50 billion in deals,'" quipped White -- a longtime entrepreneur with an easygoing banter who raised large sums for Trump in recent campaigns.

The US president may be loathed, mocked or feared by many in Europe. White says the job of representing him is "pretty easy".

- 'Truth Social' on tap -

"I get my news source from him, not from no offense but not from you or anyone else," White told AFP reporters at his official residence in Brussels.

"I read his Truth Social. I know exactly what he's thinking," said White, who makes it his mission to relay Trump's "message" to the diplomats, politicians and business leaders he rubs shoulders with each day. Like many of the ambassadors drawn from Trump's Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement, White has little of the career diplomat about him. Before politics he built an encyclopaedic career: he started out in real estate, ran a museum, raised funds for Barack Obama, and campaigned on the side for a wealthy Atlanta suburb to secede from the city.

He was also a longtime Democrat, a married gay man and champion of liberal causes with extremely good connections. Aretha Franklin sang at his wed-



U.S. Ambassador to Belgium Bill White answers questions in an interview in Brussels on April 17, 2026.

ding.

But the night of Trump's 2016 election win, White decided to throw in his lot with the Republican billionaire, reportedly ditching Hillary Clinton's deflated campaign event and crossing town to Trump's. Fast-forward to late 2025, and his arrival in Belgium as US ambassador.

Barely had he unpacked than White was summoned to the foreign ministry for intervening in a case involving Jewish circumcisers in Antwerp a probe he called "antisemitic."

He insists the row was not serious enough to dent his "amazing relationship" with Belgium, throwing in a mildly off-colour joke about circumcision to drive home the point. But it catapulted him onto the front pages in Belgium, a country of 12 million where the new ambassador has already become something of a household name.

"That's a little weird for me," he admitted.

- 'We love America!' -

White likewise plays down the impact of forays into local politics by fellow US ambassadors that have ruffled feathers in France, Poland and elsewhere.

"This whole thing about we don't love Europe, we were leaving NATO it's all

baloney," he said. "President Trump loves Belgium so much, and Europe too." He sees claims of anti-American sentiment in Europe as greatly exaggerated and has an anecdote to prove it.

"We were on a boat going through Ghent last Saturday, and we're going under the bridge, and these people are saying, 'Ambassador White from America! We love America,'" he recalled waving his arms to recreate the scene.

The US diplomat, whose residence is adorned with photos of his husband and of Trump and his wife Melania "Isn't she gorgeous?" speaks of having close ties with the Belgian government. □

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This photograph shows originals "Nintendo Game Boy" exposed in a newly opened "Video Game History Museum", a new cultural attraction dedicated to the development of the video game industry from the 1960s to the early 2000s in Zagreb, on May 29, 2025.

Game over: Players press EU to ban 'destroying' video titles

Brussels, Belgium

It's a bitter pill for video gamers: a growing number of older but still-popular titles are being dropped by publishers with servers going dark overnight in a practice the EU is being urged to outlaw. More than a million people from across Europe have backed a citizens' petition called "Stop Destroying Videogames", and are now pressing for action in Brussels.

At the heart of the issue: in the past decade, hundreds of video titles have been rendered unplayable at the whim of their publishers, for a variety of reasons ranging from profitability to changes in strategy. A significant part of popular culture is being wiped out in the process, with no compensation for gamers who in many cases have invested substantial sums, notably on microtransactions inside the playing environment.

The phenomenon has concerned older versions of hugely popular franchises such as the FIFA football simulation series.

But it was the shutdown of car-racing game The Crew that proved the final straw in 2024, prompting players to mobilise with a European

petition.

"It's a bit like buying a book from a publisher and then suddenly opening it to find the pages have gone blank because they've decided you can't play your game anymore," Brendan Fourdan, organiser of the French chapter of the petition, told AFP.

- Lawmakers 'listening' -

Buoyed by the success of the citizens' initiative, gamers' rights campaigners have been lining up meetings to persuade the EU's different institutions to step in.

After meeting in February with the European Commission's digital chief Henna Virkkunen and consumer protection head Michael McGrath, they made their case to members of the European Parliament at a hearing on Thursday.

"MEPs were listening to our demands, and their interventions largely went in our direction, with lawmakers who understood the problem and seemed determined to put an end to what we are denouncing," Fourdan said.

Campaigners are calling for existing consumer protection rules to be enforced when it comes to gaming -- but also for EU legislation to be updated,

a far bigger challenge.

"Our movement has no intention whatsoever of preventing publishers from stopping the sale of a game," Fourdan said.

"What we want is simply that when they shut down a game, they leave it in a state where it can still be played," for example on private servers run by volunteers.

Failing that, the idea is to require publishers to systematically refund players. The issue is far from trivial: video games are Europe's largest cultural industry, generating billions of euros in revenue each year.

"It's an industry with a huge amount of revenue, with a lot of cultural and technological importance," said Moritz Katzner, head of the advocacy group Stop Killing Games.

"It most definitely should be on the radar of the European Commission and the European Parliament."

Green EU lawmaker Catarina Vieira says the issue is resonating among lawmakers.

"The desire is there for all political groups to come to a good solution for those who buy games and deserve to use them for a long term," she told AFP. □



This picture taken on November 10, 2025, shows 2024 Nobel Prize in Physics winner Geoffrey Hinton, known as the "Godfather of AI," attending the Hinton Lectures in Toronto, Canada.

Unregulated AI like speeding with no steering wheel: AI godfather Hinton

Geneva, Switzerland

Artificial Intelligence pioneer Geoffrey Hinton insisted Tuesday on the need to strictly regulate the technology, warning that it remained unclear if humanity could co-exist with super intelligent AI.

Hinton, considered the "Godfather of AI", told the 2026 Digital World Conference in Geneva that there was a dire need to strengthen governance frameworks and ethical safeguards around the technology. But, he warned via video link, huge investments were going into convincing the public that regulating the technology was akin to slowing down progress.

Those opposed to regulation say "unregulated AI is like the accelerator, and regulation is like a brake", said the British-Canadian computer scientist who won the 2024 Nobel Physics Prize for his work on AI.

"They want a very fast car with no steering wheel," he said.

His comments came at the end of the day-long Geneva conference on the importance of international cooperation in shaping the social dimensions of AI.

The participants raised concerns over how global debates on AI remain largely driven by technical advances and commercial applications, with less focus on social impacts in areas including labour markets, inequality and public services.

Hinton warned about the impact AI will have on job losses.

The technology can certainly improve productivity in areas like health care, where there is always a need for more.

But in other sectors, like call centres, AI can already do the jobs as well as people and soon will do it better, he said, saying it was clear that no amount of re-training will counter that.

And "if we get super intelligent AI, any intellectual job it will be able to do," he said, meaning that "even if new jobs are created, AI will be a cheaper way to do them".

Hinton, who made headlines when he quit Google in 2023 warning of the "profound risks to society and humanity", said he remains concerned as AI progresses at lightning speed.

"We don't know whether we can co-exist with super intelligent AI," the 78-year-old said.

"But we are constructing it." □

Fondness for Francis undimmed one year after pope's death

Rome, Italy

Pilgrims prayed and shared fond memories at the tomb of Pope Francis on the first anniversary of his death Tuesday, as his successor, Leo, paid tribute to a man "who gave so much".

Italian visitor Laura Tonelli, 69, wiped her eyes with a handkerchief after praying at the modest marble tomb in Rome's Santa Maria Maggiore Basilica, inscribed with just "Franciscus", the Argentine pope's name in Latin.

"It's not sadness, it's gratitude, appreciation for everything he has done for me and my family... like a father who picks you up every time without every judging you," she told AFP. Pope Francis, a charismatic reformer, died at age 88 on April 21 last year Easter Monday after having led the world's 1.4 billion Catholics since March 2013. His immense popularity is evidenced by the long queues that form each day outside the Rome basilica, with the faithful and tourists alike lining up to pay tribute. The lines were longer than usual Tuesday, with Catholics kneeling before the tomb and bouquets of flowers piling up next to the single white rose laid there daily by church staff.

Argentine Carolina Alberi,



Postcards bearing portraits of Pope Francis and Pope Leo XIV are displayed for sale along the Via della Conciliazione, with St. Peter's Basilica in the background in Rome on April 21, 2026.

49, had extended her visit to Rome to be at Francis's tomb on Tuesday.

"He lives in us. He was a being who opened a path for us, who showed us a path. With understanding, with kindness, with a lot of resilience as well," she told AFP. "I would have loved to have gotten here (to Rome) and have him be here," she said, acknowledging that she felt closer to her former countryman than Francis's successor, Pope Leo XIV. "But, well, he's in us."

Francis died about a month after his discharge

from Rome's Gemelli hospital, where he had spent 38 days being treated for pneumonia in both lungs. He had appeared to the crowds at the Vatican on Easter Sunday, but died the following morning. He became the first pope in a century to be buried outside St Peter's Basilica. A special mass for Francis will be held Tuesday evening at Santa Maria Maggiore, the Roman basilica dear to the former pope.

- **'Closeness to the poor'** - Pope Leo, who was elected

in May 2025 as his successor, offered his own prayers for Francis on Tuesday as he arrived in Equatorial Guinea, the final stop of a four-nation African tour.

"On this first anniversary of his death, I would like to remember Pope Francis, who gave so much to the Church through his life, his witness, his words and his deeds," the first US pontiff told reporters.

"Time and again, he did this by truly living out his closeness to the poorest, the most vulnerable, the sick, children and the elderly."

He added: "Let us pray that he is already enjoying the Lord's mercy, and let us thank the Lord for the great gift of Francis's life to the whole Church and to the whole world."

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni noted that Francis reached out to "believers and non-believers alike".

"In his teaching, he consistently emphasised the value of peace, care for the most vulnerable, and responsibility toward others," she wrote on X.

The anniversary comes amid a media storm spurred by US President Donald Trump's harsh criticism last week of Pope Leo's calls for peace in the Middle East war.

Leo on Saturday sought to ease tensions with Washington, saying that a speech about "tyrants" delivered in Cameroon last week had been written well before Trump's outburst.

"It was perceived as if I were trying to start a new debate with the president, which doesn't interest me at all," Leo said.

US Vice President JD Vance, a Catholic convert who previously said Leo should "stick to matters of morality", subsequently said he was "grateful" for the clarification. □

Michelle Bachelet hopes the world is ready for a female UN chief

United Nations, United States

Former Chilean president Michelle Bachelet, a candidate for UN secretary-general, said Tuesday she hoped the world is finally "ready" for a woman in the position.

Since the United Nations was founded after World War II, all nine UN chiefs have been men, although many countries have advocated for the appointment of a woman.

In 2016, despite several female candidates, Antonio Guterres of Portugal won the race.

"If I am polite, I would say the world was not prepared for it. Is it prepared now? I hope so," Bachelet, 74, told reporters after a

three-hour hearing before member states.

"It will be a very good signal," she said. "It could get hope for many people."

In a world ravaged by wars, the candidate pleaded with member states to rebuild trust in the UN, particularly by continuing the organization's reform amid a political and financial crisis.

She also advocated for a secretary-general who would be "present in the field," somebody "who has the moral voice" and a "diplomatic stature that can be heard" by powerful states.

While distrust of the UN is often illustrated by the Security Council's paralysis

on many pressing issues, she acknowledged that she had no "magic formula" to change things.

"I don't have a magic potion that I can give to member states" especially, she said, the five permanent, veto-wielding members of the Security Council so that "everybody's friends." Three other candidates Argentina's Rafael Grossi, Costa Rica's Rebeca Grynspan and Senegal's Macky Sall will be interviewed by member states on Tuesday and Wednesday, hoping to secure what General Assembly President Annalena Baerbock described as "one of the toughest jobs in the world."

When asked what makes her the best candidate to succeed Guterres on January 1, 2027, Bachelet emphasized her "extensive

experience." As for questions about her age, she said, "I have accumulative youth." □



Former Chilean president Michelle Bachelet takes part in a discussion at the University of Valparaiso, Chile, on March 31, 2026.

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Counting a billion people: Inside India's mega census drive

New Delhi, India

Sukhwinder Kaur battles the scorching sun as she trudges door-to-door in New Delhi as part of India's colossal exercise to count more than one billion citizens.

Kaur is among three million census enumerators fanning out across cities and villages in an exercise that will help shape policy for the country's estimated 1.4 billion people for years to come.

Billed as the world's largest population count, the census is being held in two phases at a cost of \$1.25 billion, according to the government.

Last week, the heat became overwhelming for Kaur, a government school teacher.

"I went back home, but returned again in the evening," said Kaur, who will be paid 25,000 rupees (\$270) for the assignment, like other census enumerators. Feebly knocking on a door in the servants' quarters of an upscale housing society, Kaur, 38, tried to explain the purpose of her visit to an elderly resident. "Because we have been handling children, we have, in a way, learned how to deal with all kinds of



Lalit Verma (R), a census enumerator and a school teacher, collects details of housing and amenities during a door-to-door survey in the first phase of the census at a residential area in New Delhi on April 20, 2026.

people," she said.

"Some speak politely, some behave strangely but we know how to handle them." In the first phase, census takers ask 33 questions related to water, sanitation, electricity, cooking fuel and internet.

The second phase next year will focus on economic status as well as the more contentious question of caste the millennia-old social hierarchy that is deeply entwined with Indian politics and welfare entitlements.

As in the past, census results will be released in phases starting late next year.

- Welfare schemes -

The Hindu-majority nation faces mounting challenges in providing housing, electricity and other basic needs to its growing population.

Many of its megacities are

already grappling with water shortages and overcrowded slums.

The government says the first phase "forms an essential foundation for evidence-based planning and formulation of welfare and development programmes."

In the southern tech hub of Bengaluru, teacher Sheikha Shavali held on to his cap to shield against the sun as he made his way through the cramped lanes of Maya Bazaar.

"I take a break once every two hours," he said with a smile.

Enumerators have to survey 20-25 houses a day but Shavali, 50, has no complaints.

"I am treating this work as my small contribution to help these people. If I get the data out correctly, proper schemes can be made for them."

Most of the houses in the area, dotted with open drains, do not have a toilet. Residents have to walk several meters to use the nearest public lavatory. But Shavali noted most of the households had at least one smartphone, underscoring India's uneven growth.

For the first time, the census is being conducted through a dedicated mobile app.

But the digital shift has not been seamless.

Lalit Verma, a 48-year-old Delhi teacher, said he was also taking notes in a diary in case the data is lost due to glitches.

Others have welcomed the change.

Bengaluru teacher Anandi A. said the app was "easy to use".

"It takes about five to 10 minutes to finish putting in details of one household,"

she said.

- 'Speak calmly' -

Punith, who uses one name and has been tasked with training census takers in Bengaluru, said earlier it would take "many months" for data to be scrutinised and verified.

"Now (within) three to four hours, I will sync (the data) and it goes to supervisor, then the supervisor will approve it and the census gets completed," he told AFP.

India's last census was held in 2011. The one planned in 2021 was delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The groundwork for the latest census included training sessions that focus as much on temperament as on technology.

At one such session attended by AFP in Bengaluru, enumerators were instructed on how first impressions could make or break an interview.

"Greet politely, state your name and purpose, and immediately show your official ID," the guidelines read.

Enumerators must dress neatly and speak calmly, avoiding any tone that might sound hurried or rude.

They are also trained to explain to residents that their personal data is protected under the Census Act.

Refusals are expected, and trainees are advised to offer return visits rather than push for answers.

Back in Delhi, Verma encountered locked homes, hesitant residents and houses where only children were present.

"I have noted the house numbers," he said.

"I will revisit those homes where complete information was not received." □

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Aruba's underwater wonderland

(Oranjestad)—Exploring the underwater wonders is something you should definitely do during your stay in Aruba. The underwater world has everything to offer that makes a snorkel trip so exceptional; an impressive, colorful sea life with exotic fishes, turtles and beautiful coral reef. The historic shipwrecks, located on the Aruban seabed are also worth a visit. Aruba is known for its white beaches and blue oceans, which means there are many fascinating underwater spots you can explore. So take your snorkeling gear and visit some of these top places for underwater exploration.

Tres Trapi

'Tres Trapi' means three steps in Papiamentu. The beach is called Tres Trapi because it is accessible by a tiny stairway carved into the rocky coastline. Tres Trapi is a small beach, located on the north-western side of the island, an approximately 5 to 10 minute drive from Palm Beach. From the unique steps you walk right into the clear and turquoise blue ocean. While you're snorkeling, you will encounter all kind of tropical fishes and sea stars. The kind of starfish you will find in the Aruban waters is the red cushion sea star. This is a starfish that is commonly found in the shallow waters of the Caribbean Sea and if you are lucky during your snorkeling visit to Tres Trapi, you may

come across one of the green sea turtles. Respect the animals, keep your distance and just enjoy the view. Also remember; it is a once in a life time experience.

Antilla shipwreck

Antilla is a 400-foot-long ship, built in 1939 in Hamburg, Germany. Antilla came to Aruba, because it had to find a neutral port. When Germany invaded the Netherlands on May 10, 1940, the crew decided to let their own ship sink, to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Dutch Navy. Antilla lies on its port-side in Malmok bay, and the sunken WWII ship is now one of Aruba's most popular snorkeling and dive spots. However, the ship wreck can only be reached by boat. The ship is visible from the surface and during your snorkeling trip you be surrounded by hundreds of tropical fishes, but the ship wreck alone is already impressive enough.

Baby Beach

Baby beach is a lagoon with crystal blue ocean. The beach is located on the southern part of the island. On the way to the famous beach, you will drive through the old capital of Aruba, San Nicolas. The old Aruban culture can be still felt and experienced here, so do not hesitate to get out of your car and walk around for a while. Baby beach is a child friendly beach, since it is shallow and the water has



a pleasant temperature. The name therefore fits well with the beach. Further in the lagoon, you'll find a lot of people snorkeling. This is an excellent spot to go under water exploring—but do take care not to go too far out; outside the lagoon the waves can be pretty rough! In the lagoon there is an area marked until where it is recommended to snorkel and on the beach you will find different facilities. It is a perfect beach to spend your day snorkeling and relaxing.

Mangel Halto

Mangel Halto beach is located in Savaneta, on the southern-west part of the island. The beach is

different from the other beaches in Aruba; it is beach full of mangroves. The main entrance to reach the beach is through a small bridge that takes you through the mangrove trees. There are diverse spots where you can enjoy a perfect beach day, accompanied with wooden stairs built to allow easy access to the water and a dock to sit on and enjoy the view. Mangel Halto is also worth a visit for the snorkeling experience. Inside the bay, the water is clear and you'll find many colorful fish. Outside the bay is a bit more challenging for beginners because of the wind and the waves, but the coral is alive and it is snorkel heaven. □





Why You Should Not Miss Aruba's Free City Center Street Car Tour

(Oranjestad)—Aruba's City Center Street Car – or as we call it in Dutch; "Tram van Oranjestad" – is a single track tram line in Oranjestad, the capital city of Aruba. It was inaugurated on 22 December 2012, being the first and so far the only passenger rail service on Aruba and the rest of the Dutch Caribbean. There are two trolleys, a single-deck one with 42 seats and a double-decker with 64 seats. The line was inspired by the popular battery-powered streetcar operation at the Grove in Los Angeles, USA. Aruba's streetcars are powered by hydrogen fuel cells, which are charged by the island's year-round trade winds.

Caya Betico Croes, mostly referred to as our "main street" has been developed into a pollution-free pedestrian mall. The double-decker offers you a 360

degree view of the downtown area with a picture perfect scenery of the island's clear blue skies. Who would not enjoy a ride on this beautiful and naturally air-conditioned vehicle? The tour consists of a total of 9 stops approximately 200 meters apart from each other; all stops are clearly marked. The tram will bring you close to different museums, historical plazas, monuments, the Protestant church, Aruba's high-end mall, retail shops, and a variety of local and international cuisine restaurants. The "I love Aruba" trademark also belongs to that list. The third stop on the route is close to a 5-minute walk to the famous Renaissance Marina showcasing luxurious yachts and Aruba's blue waters.

The "Tram van Oranjestad" starts from a balloon loop near the Port of Call and



serves the downtown area and ends at Plaza Nicky. The first ride starts at 10:00 am sharp with intervals of

25 minutes. The last trolley departs from the cruise port at 5:00 pm. Don't miss this tour of the beautiful Aru-

ba's City Center – it is free for all!

Birds of Aruba: Soaring through the blue skies

(Oranjestad)—Aruba's nature is very diverse and is home to several beautiful and majestic wildlife. Among these is the bright Trupial, whose angelic voice is always heard with the rising sun; the cuddly parakeet, always in company of another, and the majestic Warawara, a mighty bird that can be seen soaring in the clear blue skies.

Trupial



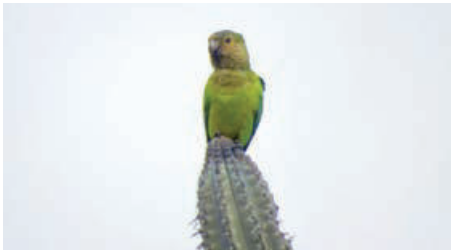
Icterus icterus, or known locally as the Venezuelan or Orange Trou-pial, is a striking songbird whose bright orange feathers can be spotted from a far distance. Known to be the first bird to sing at the first

sign of sunrise, this beloved song-bird likes to wake up with a tune. But don't let their angelic songs fools you; the Trupial can be a bit aggressive towards any threat, protective over their nesting spots—nesting spots they most likely stole from other birds. Trupials can be seen regularly, often in trees or on top of a cactus.

Photo Credit: Daniel Ruben Gonzalez

Prikichi (parakeet)

The Brown-throated Prikichi (Aratinga pertinax) became the national bird of Aruba back in 2015, at the request of Aruba Birdlife Conserva-



tion. The bright green, adorable parakeet usually flies in flock of 30 or more, but its population has been declining since the 2010s. Prikichis are a shier breed than the trupial, often flying away at the sign of any threat. They use termite nests for breeding spots and feed mostly on seeds from the Kwihi tree, Divi Divi tree and fruits.

Photo Credit: Daniel Ruben Gonzalez

Warawara

The Warawara or Caracara is one of the biggest birds found in the Aruban mondi. At a heigh of 41 to 60 cm, their wingspan can measure up to 125 cm. Known as the "garbage man", this bird of prey mostly feeds on dead animals. Its coat is dark brown, with a cream-colored neck, orange face, thick beak and long legs. The Warawara prefers to build its nest in the middle of tall cacti and produces a



rattling, screaming sound, throwing its head back onto its back while calling.

While these birds are a beautiful sight to behold, it is very important to keep your distance and respect their habitats. This is how we protect our wildlife. By admiring the beauty of Aruba in a safe and respectful manner, we can do our part in protecting our sacred nature.

Photo Credit: Aruba Birdlife Conservation

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The legend of the Kibrahacha tree

ORANJESTAD—The Kibrahacha is a famous tree known locally for its bright, yellow flowers that blooms for just three days. Scientifically known as *Tabebuia billbergii*, and in English as the Yellow Poui, this tree is native to the Caribbean islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao, and is considered among locals as one of the most spectacular trees on the island. But did you also know that the beautiful yellow flowers have a story behind them?

The Kibrahacha is said to have extremely hard wood—so hard that it can break an axe. In fact, that's what its name means in Papiamentu: "kibra" (break) "hacha" (axe). The flowers bloom around April and May, but this only last for about three days, as the flowers start to fall off and the tree starts growing its green leaves. The Kibrahacha is especially particular, as it's the only one among its neighboring trees to starts blooming first.

The legend of the Kibrahacha

Written by Hubert (Lio Booi)

One day Aterima, who lived west of the hill Sero Warawara, woke up one day to find her father sleeping in his hammock, suffering a bout of terrible fever. Her mother was very worried, and as was the custom in the olden days, asked Aterima to go fetch Kudawechea, who was a epistemophile, to come see his father.

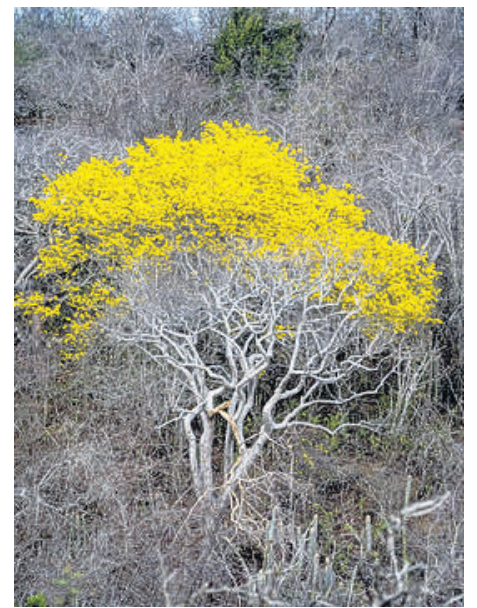
Aterima wasted time and went to go fetch Kudawechea. Upon telling Kudawechea that her father was sick, he immediately accompanied Aterima back to her hut, where he encountered her father in a bad state. Not willing to waste any time, he told Aterima that the only thing that can cure her father is a home-made potion made out of the Kibrahacha flower. At the time the Kibrahacha was not yet in her blooming season, but the stubborn Kudawechea was determined to bring back Aterima's father back to health, and so off they went to the nearest Kibrahacha tree.

When they arrived at the tree, they

saw that it was covered head to toe in thorns, with only a few closed flowers at the very top. Kudawechea, experienced veteran in all things Aruban flora and fauna, told Aterima to start plucking the thorns of the tree to climb to the top where the flowers are. Aterima, just as determined to save her father, didn't hesitate to start.

To her surprise, every time she plucked a thorn of the tree, a bright, yellow flower bloomed in its place. The thorns were hard to pluck out, but Aterima continued plucking with enthusiasm and wonder at the unfolding sight before her. Not too long after she was able to fill her entire satchel with the yellow flowers.

Kudawechea, satisfied to see Aterima so happy and encouraged to help her father, took her back to her hut. Upon arriving back at the hut, Aterima's mother quickly made a tea out of the flowers and gave it to her sick husband. Miraculously, after just one sip of the tea, the father's fever left his body immediately, and



he opened eyes and sprung up feeling new.

The next morning, they all visited the same Kibrahacha tree that saved the life of Aterima's father and they saw another miracle. The tree was covered again in the same bright, yellow flowers, with not a thorn in sight. And as the legend goes, from that day on, the Kibrahacha tree no longer produced any more thorns. □

Planning on snorkeling? Get to know our Picuda!



(Oranjestad)—If you're ever planning on snorkeling during your vacation on Aruba, you may spot fish that you can't recognize. One of these may be the "Picuda", a very common fish that swims all year long in the waters of Aruba. Here's some information about the beloved Picuda.

Well known is the Picuda on the island—Barracuda in English. Its scientific name is *Sphyrna barracuda*. It is a widely caught fish. It is found throughout the year in our waters, where it is a so-called "ambush predator" that stays still or floats in the water waiting for its prey to approach so it can attack it with lightning speed. It is well known for fishermen, especially for its white flesh in fish soup. In fishing culture, there

are many other names, such as Pecho blanco, Blekito, Banana, or Bleki. The names vary according to size.

In Aruba:

Picuda can be found in our waters around our island throughout the year. Picuda, in our waters, is edible without any problem. Picuda is also a highly sought-after fish by sports fishermen or recreational fishermen because it puts up a good fight once hooked. It can be caught via trolling from a boat, casting from shore with a line or rod, or by jigging, casting the lure (artificial bait) and moving it with certain rod motions.

Picture courtesy of the Department of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (Santo Rosa). □



Article by Etnia Nativa

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Episode CCCXLIX - 349

Discovering the Roots of the Sea: Mangroves

In this new episode, Etnia Nativa delivers a powerful reminder of why mangroves matter now more than ever, echoing the wisdom of Thai fishermen: 'If there are no mangrove forests, the sea will have no meaning, because mangroves are the roots of the sea'.

Mangroves are remarkable ecosystems that form a natural bridge between land and sea. Found along tropical coastlines, estuaries, and lagoons, these salt-tolerant trees and shrubs thrive in conditions where few others can survive. Growing below the maximum tide level, mangroves create a unique ecosystem that is as resilient as it is essential.

Their role in environmental protection is profound. Acting as a natural barrier, mangroves shield coastlines from erosion while softening the impact of waves, storm surges, and extreme weather events such as hurricanes and tsunamis. Their intricate root systems filter pollutants like nitrates and phosphates carried by rivers, improving water quality and protecting both freshwater and marine ecosystems. At the same time, they prevent seawater from encroaching inland, maintaining a delicate ecological balance.

Mangroves are also vital allies in the fight against climate change. Experts estimate that they capture and store approximately 34 million tons of carbon globally, making them one of the planet's most efficient natural carbon sinks.

Beyond their environmental importance, mangroves are biodiversity hotspots. Their roots provide shelter and breeding grounds for fish, crabs, shrimp, and mollusks, while birds depend on them for nesting and feeding. Nearby coral reefs also benefit, as juvenile marine species use mangroves as safe nurseries during the early stages of life.

For coastal communities, mangroves are indispensable. They support livelihoods by providing food and resources. At low tide, people gather shellfish and shrimp from the exposed flats; at high tide, fish enter the mangrove forests, turning them into rich fishing grounds. Mangrove trees themselves offer wood for



construction, fuel, medicinal resources, and tannins.

Recent scientific research has even uncovered new possibilities. Mangroves' natural tolerance to salinity has opened doors in biotechnology, including studies exploring how their genes might help develop salt-resistant crops like rice—potentially transforming agriculture for coastal regions.

Yet, despite their resilience, mangroves are highly sensitive to environmental changes. They require a precise balance of saltwater and freshwater to survive. Rising sea levels, driven by climate change, disrupt this balance, while pollution and overexploitation further threaten their existence.

Aruba's history offers a cautionary tale. In the early 19th century, mangrove oysters once supported a small but thriving local industry. Harvested from mangrove roots, they provided both food and income. However, mangrove wood soon became more valuable and was heavily exploited for construction projects, including fort building in Curaçao and lime production. As development expanded, mangrove forests were cleared, leading to the collapse of oyster populations and long-term ecological damage.

Today, the consequences of those choices remain visible. What was once a sustainable resource was lost to short-term gain, altering the island's environmental balance.

The lesson is clear: protecting mangroves is not just about conserving nature—it is about preserving culture, livelihoods, and the future of coastal communities. Responsible tourism and environmental awareness are critical. Respecting protected areas, reducing waste, and supporting conservation efforts are small but meaningful steps that can collectively make a difference.

Mangroves are more than trees; they are lifelines. In Aruba, they still stand—resilient, vital, and irreplaceable. The question that remains is simple: will we stand with them?

For those eager to go beyond the surface of Aruba's postcard beauty, Etnia Nativa offers something rare: a deeply personal encounter with the island's ancestral soul. Rooted in the lineage of native Aruban families and pre-Columbian heritage, it invites visitors to step into history—not as observers, but as participants.

Because in Aruba, heritage is not just preserved—it is lived. □

Don't just visit Aruba—understand it.
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Get to know the history of the gold industry on Aruba



(Oranjestad)— We have talked about the Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruin before and its brief history during the gold industry on Aruba, but get to know a little more about the history of the “Aruban Gold Rush.”

The first hint of gold on Aruba actually dates back to 1725, when rumors about gold being found in dug up treasure chests of the Spanish colonial era prompted the first official exploration for gold on the island, commissioned by the Dutch West India Company. Under the leadership of Mr. Paulus Printz, a three-year search was conducted on Aruba, to no avail. Though they found some specks of gold, it was not enough to motivate a further search, and the assignment was discontinued by Printz himself. It wasn't until 100 years later, in 1824, when a young farmer boy named Willem Rasmijn found a lump of gold while out herding his father's sheep in the area of Rooi Fluit on the north coast. His father took it to a local merchant who then sold the lump for \$70. Unbeknownst to the boy and his father, they quite literally struck gold, and as word got out, a gold fever spread among the locals who started searching for more gold. When the colonial governor in Curacao, Governor Cantz'laar, heard about the news, he sent his adjutant, Capitan van Raders, to start harvesting gold. This was in July 1824. In August of that same year, the governor followed suit to

the island, accompanied by high-ranking military officials. When citizens started swarming the area in search for gold, The Netherlands sent more troops to safe guard the gold.

Prominent places where gold was found was in Daimari, Wacobana, Arikok, Rooi Fluit, Hadicou radi and later West punt, where gold ore was found. Because of a lack in advanced technology and materials to harvest the gold, the process took a more primitive approach: Clay rocks containing traces of gold were left to dry in the sun. Then, workers would start chipping the clay away on a large canvas to catch the gold particles that were left behind after the wind blew away the dust from the clay. In the harvest period of 1824-1825, there was a total of 71,000 kilos collected through commissioned harvesting. Locals themselves reportedly found about 25 pounds worth of gold in the nearby rivers. The following years after that first big harvest, commission work fell off, and in 1828, the director of the goldmines, Johan Gravenhorst, decided to halt harvesting. Almost 40 years later, the London-based Aruba Island Gold Mining Company Ltd. was granted concession. The firm built their gold mines on Bushiribana, and in the port of Oranjestad a long road that connected the gold mill to the port. The ores themselves came from Sero Plat en Sero Cristal.

By this point, workers were still us-



ing primitive methods to harvest the ores. For example, when someone had to go into the mines, there were no stairs or lifts; the person had to be brought down in a big bucket, with two or more workers holding the bucket by a thick rope above ground.

Aruba Island Gold Mining Company Ltd. reportedly operated until 1899, and right after the Aruba Gold Concession Ltd. was established, coincidentally also based in London. This time, the gold mill in Balashi was built, and more mines were dug up all around the island. The gold ores that were found were transported via track engine, locally called the “trekinchi”. Despite being more equipped for the job, the Aruba Gold Concession Ltd. could not produce any real profit, and so the concession was terminated just eight years later, in 1908.

A local firm, the “Aruba Goud Maatschappij” (Aruba Gold Company) took over the concession, along with all the materials and equipment. In the beginning, the company saw good profit, and for a while, the island's economy depended primarily on the mining and harvesting of gold. But just

like its predecessors, the streak of luck for the Aruba Gold Company came to an end when WWI broke out.

The main reason why production stopped this time was reportedly because of a lack in dynamite for extracting the ores from the mines, as well as a lack in raw materials like German cyanide for the refining process. By the time the war ended, the equipment that was left at Balashi were too old to use again. After the war, gold production on the Aruba was left to a standstill.

According to an issue in Aruba Esso News paper in 1953, Henny Eman wanted to start up digging again, this time using independent miners. He argued that there was proof of more gold to be discovered. Plus, hiring independent miners would boost the island's employment rate.

When it was proven that gold was in fact still present, the executive board on the island promised to fund the project only if the gold dug up proved to be valuable. However, nothing else was reported after this, so it could be concluded that there was no real profitable market on the island anymore.

The ruins of the Bushiribana and Balashi Gold Mills are still standing, and open for the public to visit. These structures offer a glance into the past, to a time where Aruba experienced one of its first wave of industrialization. Today, these structures are persevered as historical monuments.



Source:

1. “De Kolibrie op de Rots (en meer over the geschiedenis van Aruba)” by Evert Bongers.
2. Aruba Esso News, 1953 issue.

CROSSWORD

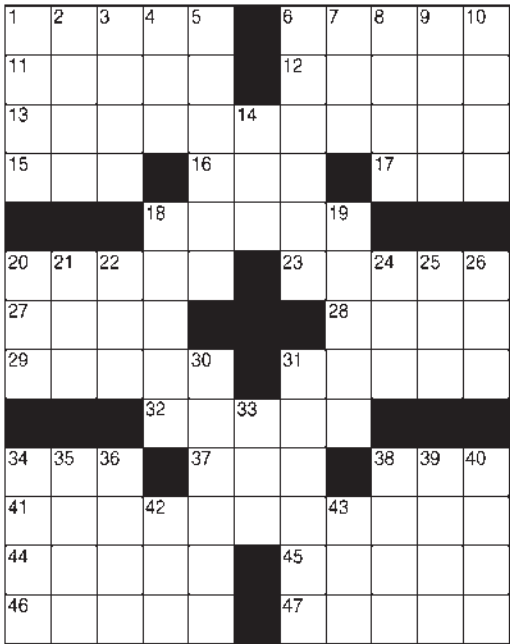
By **THOMAS JOSEPH**

ACROSS

- 1 Puts in the oven
6 Exams
11 River bend
12 Snow house
13 Led to opportunities
15 Morse bit
16 Calendar box
17 Court
18 Disgusted
20 Kyoto setting
23 Plumbing conduits
27 Full range
28 Battery unit
29 Yard plus a bit
31 Snug
32 Express stop
34 Cart puller
37 Taxi
38 Debt note
41 United in the face of a challenge
44 Less
45 Find charming
46 Borders
47 Sub sounder

DOWN

- 1 Car part
2 Trade fair
3 Aid illegally
4 Shipping weight
5 Stockholm setting
6 Neaten the room
7 Sense of self
8 Leisurely
9 Matador's foe
10 Mediocre
14 Pop
18 Disconcerted
19 Turning point
20 Traffic snarl
21 Had lunch
22 Cook's need
24 Small dog, for short
25 Middle-earth resident
26 Pig's digs
30 School break
31 Hooded snakes
33 Spot to jot
34 Peak
35 Glided
36 Musical number
38 Privy to
39 Gumbo vegetable
40 Manipulative one
42 Take to court
43 Foofaraw



5-9

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

5-9 CRYPTOQUOTE

ANN SYPF XZKS, DB AYJU
RUUDR AYSU NPU ANPF
NXRMZKAU TZKU, CYMW DU ZR
MWU K WYUJ NXRMZKAU.
— LZKS OZZT

Cryptoquote: TO DESCRIBE MY MOTHER WOULD BE TO WRITE ABOUT A HURRICANE IN ITS PERFECT POWER. — MAYA ANGELOU

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic—but important—information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

Electrical power

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.

Drinking water



The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the

store.

Supermarket hours

Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as

the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.



CRUISE SHIP SCHEDULE

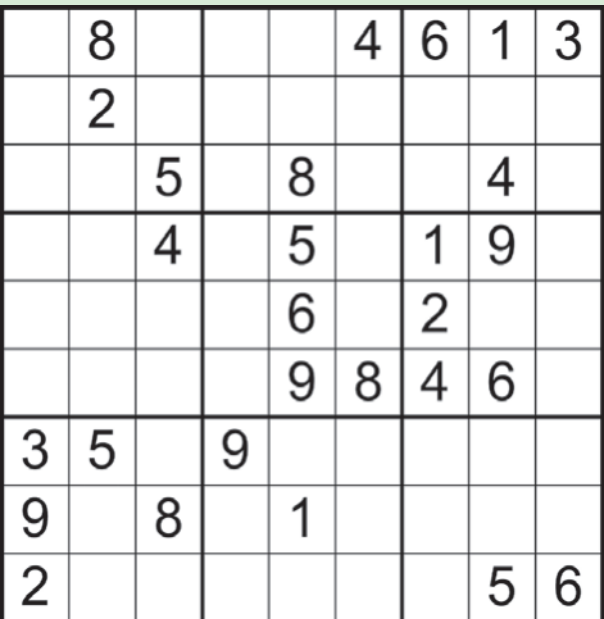
20 MON	MARELLA DISCOVERY 2 Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 20:00 Berth: C
21 TUE	CARNIVAL VISTA Arrival: 13:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C OASIS OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: I
22 WED	CELEBRITY SILHOUETTE Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: B SERENADE OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C
28 TUE	CARNIVAL HORIZON Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: C

ARUBA TODAY

SUDOKU

To play sudoku, use logic to fill the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9 only once. Puzzle difficulty increases from Monday to Sunday.

King Classic Sudoku



Difficulty: ★★★

4/22

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Answer to previous puzzle

5	2	3	6	7	8	1	9	4
9	8	1	4	5	3	2	6	7
6	7	4	9	1	2	5	8	3
2	3	5	8	6	1	7	4	9
8	6	9	2	4	7	3	1	5
1	4	7	5	3	9	8	2	6
7	1	6	3	2	4	9	5	8
4	9	2	7	8	5	6	3	1
3	5	8	1	9	6	4	7	2

Difficulty: ★★

4/21

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Rover discovers more building blocks of life on Mars

Paris, France

A NASA rover has discovered more building blocks of life on Mars after carrying out a chemistry experiment never before conducted on another planet, scientists said Tuesday.

The organic molecules are not definitive evidence of past life, the NASA-led team emphasised, because they could also have formed on the red planet or crash-landed on meteorites.

But it proves that these important clues to Martian history have been preserved on the surface for more than three billion years, they added.

Back then, the surface of Mars was thought to have been dotted with huge lakes and rivers full of liquid water, a key ingredient for life as we know it.

NASA's Curiosity rover landed in a former lake bed called the Gale crater in 2012, and has been searching for signs of possible past life since.

The car-sized rover carried two tubes of a chemical called TMAH, which can break apart organic matter to see what it is made out of.

"This experiment's never been run before on another world," Amy Williams, an astrobiologist working on the Curiosity mission told AFP.



This NASA photo released June 7, 2018 shows a low-angle self-portrait of NASA's Curiosity Mars rover vehicle at the site from which it reached down to drill into a rock target called "Buckskin" on lower Mount Sharp.

The team were under pressure because they only had "two shots to get it right", added Williams, the lead author of a new study describing the results.

The experiment, conducted in 2020, detected more than 20 organic molecules, including several that had never before been confirmed on Mars.

These included a molecule called benzo thiophene, which has also been found in meteorites and asteroids.

"The same stuff that rained down on Mars from meteorites is what rained down on Earth, and it probably provided the building blocks for life as we know it on our planet," Williams said.

Another molecule containing nitrogen "is a precursor to how DNA is eventually

built," she added. "We're seeing the building blocks for life prebiotic chemistry on Mars preserved in these rocks for billions of years." □

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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

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Romanian AI music sensation Lolita sparks racism debate

Bucharest, Romania

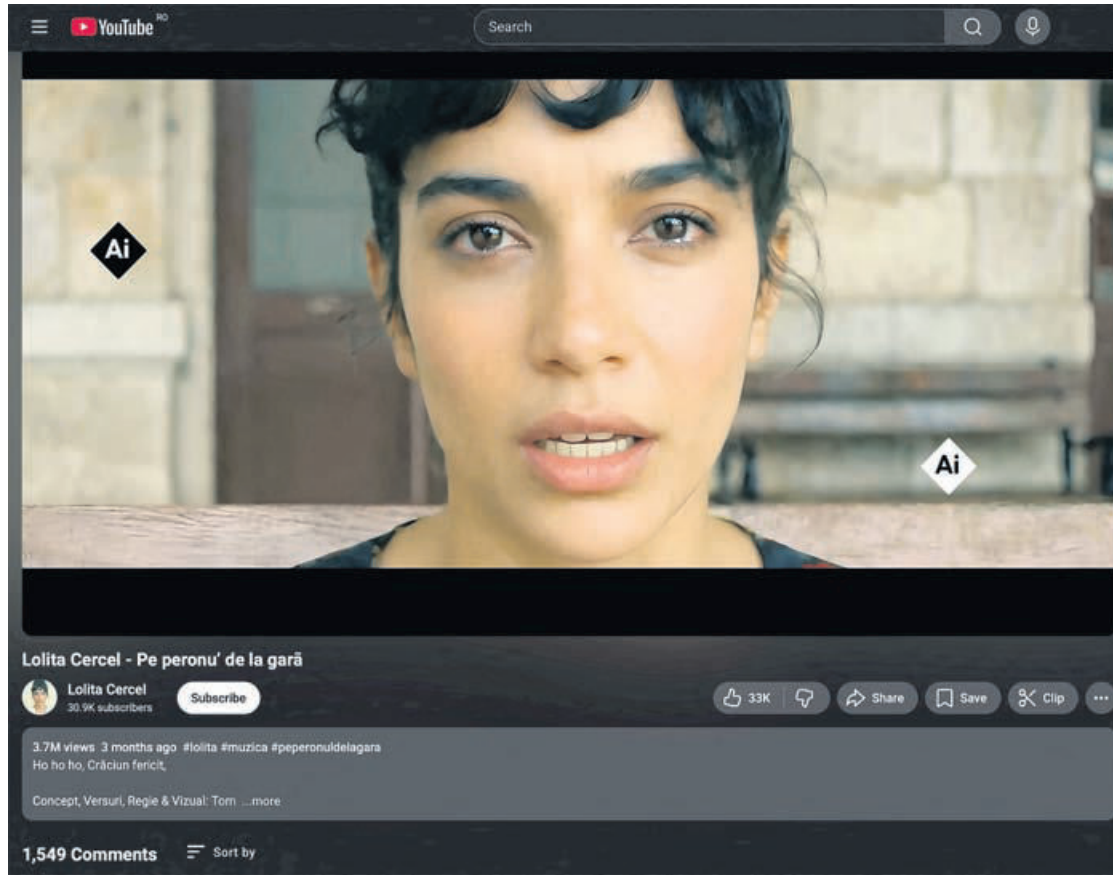
The sultry songs of Lolita Cercel, an AI-generated singer, are a sensation in Romania, racking up millions of views online -- but angering real-life musicians and drawing criticism from the Roma minority as a racist cliché.

Since debuting late last year, "Lolita" has given TV interviews, landed representation by a top booking agency and had a cabinet member use the digitally generated singer's telegenic image to promote his ministry's projects.

But the videos' popularity has stirred debate in Romania about artificial intelligence replacing humans, and has raised questions about ethnic stereotypes in a country with a history of discriminating against the Roma.

Lolita is "a very sexualised" character, "a non-Roma man's fantasy of what a Roma woman might look like", Bogdan Burdusel, a 35-year-old Roma activist, told AFP, criticising "latent and unaddressed racism" in Romanian society.

Real-life Roma singer Bianca Mihai, a contestant on the Romanian version of reality TV show "The Voice" last year, called Lolita's overnight success "unfair".



A screen grab of a video showing AI generated singer Lolita, pictured in Bucharest, Romania, on April 16, 2026.

"I'm trying to build a career right now, and I feel like there's no room for me," said Mihai, 25, who juggles a full-time job as an IT consultant with studio rehearsals and an acting gig.

In reality, Lolita is the work of a man who calls himself Tom, a 32-year-old visual designer who said he did not necessarily mean for his creation to have a Roma identity.

Tom, who spoke on condi-

tion of anonymity, said Lolita "doesn't necessarily belong to a specific culture". "She reflects the reality of millions of people living in the Balkans. She embodies a Balkan identity more than a Romani one," he told AFP.

Tom, who has described his project as "a fusion of Balkan nostalgia and the synthetic future", said he chose folk music traditionally played by Roma for

Lolita's songs because it "speaks the truth most bluntly" and represents "a kind of blues of our own".

- 'Didn't mean to offend' -

"I didn't mean to offend anyone," he said, seeming shy and uncomfortable with the media attention the project has generated. Tom said he wrote the lyrics for Lolita's songs about "love and everyday struggles" and used prompts

to produce the music and videos with AI, not expecting it "to go so viral".

In public comments, he has praised AI for "democratising" musical creation.

AI-generated tracks regularly go viral, and global music industry body IFPI has called on the sector to ensure AI-generated content compensates musicians.

AI is "really good" at focusing in on people's music consumption, mimicking what the industry usually offers, said Grigore Burloiu, a lecturer in interactive technologies at the National University of Theatre and Film in Bucharest.

"No one woke up overnight and said: 'That's it, I like AI'... AI is all about finding the lowest common denominator," he told AFP.

- 'That hurts' -

In one of Tom's most-viewed songs, a teary-eyed Lolita, wearing a red flower dress and hoop earrings, stares into the camera on a train platform.

The avatar calls herself "a cast-out gypsy", asking her married lover if she's not worth a dime compared to his "proper fine lady" who has "furs and money".

"She's exactly the kind of girl we find very easy to accept and exoticise," said real-life singer Mihai. □

'The Devil Wears Prada 2' stars reunite for glamorous premiere

New York, United States

Two decades after "The Devil Wears Prada" became a modern US classic, its stars reunited in New York on Monday for

the long-awaited sequel's world premiere.

Meryl Streep, who returns as tyrannical magazine editor Miranda Priestly, was joined on the red car-

pet by fellow A-listers Anne Hathaway, Emily Blunt and Stanley Tucci.

"It was like, why did it take so long?" Streep told Disney Plus when asked about stepping back into her fearsome character's shoes.

Tucci agreed: "Yes, exactly. It was like riding a bicycle."

"The Devil Wears Prada 2" sees a now well established Andy Sachs (Hathaway) back at Runway Magazine, where Miranda Priestly (Streep) is navigating the decline of print media. The veteran editor is forced to go head-to-head with her former, frantic assistant Emily Charlton (Blunt) now a high-powered executive who controls the advertis-

ing revenue that Priestly needs.

Kenneth Branagh joins the cast as Miranda's newest husband, along with newcomers like Simone Ashley and Lucy Liu.

Naturally, fashion was front and center at Monday's premiere, where three-time Oscar winner Streep wore a red Givenchy outfit.

She said in an interview that all the clothes, jewelry, bags and shoes featured in "The Devil Wears Prada 2" are to be auctioned for the Committee to Protect Journalists.

Co-stars Hathaway and Blunt, who wore Louis Vuitton and Schiaparelli respectively, credited fans

for making the sequel happen.

"We're literally here because of you, because you took us into your hearts and kept us there for 20 years and said 'we want more.' That's why this whole dream has continued for us," Hathaway told Disney Plus.

Other red carpet celebrities included Anna Wintour, the former Vogue editor, who is considered the inspiration for Streep's character.

"The Devil Wears Prada 2" opens in theaters on May 1.

Its 2006 precursor is widely seen as a definitive satire of the US fashion industry, capturing the allure of power and ambition. □



(L-R) U.S. actress Meryl Streep, British actress Emily Blunt, US actor Stanley Tucci and US actress Anne Hathaway attend the world premiere of "The Devil Wears Prada 2" at Lincoln Center in New York City, on April 20, 2026.



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'We weren't soft, we were skilled': Nowitzki on NBA's European revolution

Berlin, Germany

As he is inducted into the FIBA Hall of Fame, Dallas Mavericks and German basketball legend Dirk Nowitzki is typically humble in downplaying his role in changing the game.

Arriving in the NBA when European players were often derided as soft, the 2.13-metre (7ft) Nowitzki and the Gasol brothers Pau and Marc not only helped change perceptions; they created an enduring shift in the sport itself.

Nowitzki's legacy is that the skilful European big man who can shoot is no longer a novelty, but very much the incarnation of the modern player.

Already towering over adults while coming through the junior ranks, Nowitzki's long-time coach and mentor Holger Geschwindner told the skinny teenager to focus on fundamental skills rather than bulking up.

"I met Holger, who taught



German former basketball player Dirk Nowitzki poses on the red carpet as he arrive for the FIBA Women's Basketball 2026 World Cup draw and FIBA Hall of Fame 2026 Induction ceremony in Berlin on April 21, 2026.

me about shooting and moving on the court. I thought I could shoot a little bit but when we started, he was like 'You're doing everything wrong'," Nowitzki told AFP in Berlin.

"We started from scratch,

from zero, like I'd never shot before."

Nowitzki's iconic one-legged fadeaway, the unguardable move sprinkled through his highlights reels, came directly from those early coaching sessions.

- 'We were skilled' -

Drafted by the Milwaukee Bucks in 1998, Nowitzki was traded immediately to the Dallas Mavericks, where he spent his entire 21-year career.

While the groundwork had been laid by European big men like Serbia's Vlade Divac and fellow German Detlef Schrempf, negative stereotypes still lingered.

"When we came over there late '90s, we were tall and we were shooting the ball. That was perceived as soft, but we were skilled."

Nowitzki admits the mid-2000s rule changes designed to improve the flow of the game also helped, including the five-second rule, which restricted solo plays.

"If I got Charles Barkley and I give him 10 seconds to dribble, I couldn't hold him up."

"We got lucky there, I think, for Europeans, for bigs, that the game was changing at the right time."

In 2007, Nowitzki became the first European to win the NBA MVP award and only the third non-American after Nigerian Hakeem Olajuwon and Canada's Steve Nash. □

Wembanyama wins NBA defensive player of the year

Los Angeles, United States

San Antonio Spurs star Victor Wembanyama was named the NBA's defensive player of the year on Monday, becoming the first unanimous winner in the award's 43-year history.

France international Wembanyama, a generational talent who has helped transform San Antonio into title contenders, earned a perfect 100 votes in the media ballot.

Oklahoma City's Chet Holmgren came in second in the voting, with Detroit's Ausar Thompson ranked third.

The win marked another

milestone in the meteoric rise of Wembanyama, who at 22 is the youngest player in history to win the honor.

"I'm super, super happy to win this award and actually super proud to be the first-ever unanimous," Wembanyama told NBC Sports Network following the award.

The 7ft 4in (2.24m) Frenchman has been billed as the future face of the NBA ever since he landed in the league after being chosen by San Antonio with the top overall pick in the 2023 Draft.

Mixing prodigious defense with a potent offense,

Wembanyama has excelled again this season and is regarded as one of the front-runners for the NBA's Most Valuable Player award.

Wembanyama led the league in blocks per game (3.08) for a third straight season and helped lead the Spurs to the No.3 ranking in defensive ratings.

On Sunday, Wembanyama lit up the playoffs in his first postseason game, scoring 35 points to go with five rebounds and two blocks as San Antonio defeated the Portland Trail Blazers.

German basketball legend Dirk Nowitzki told AFP

in an interview on Monday ahead of his induction to the FIBA Hall of Fame

that Wembanyama was "changing the game as we speak." □



Victor Wembanyama #1 of the San Antonio Spurs blocks the shot of Shaedon Rupert #17 of the Portland Trailblazers in the first half of Game One of the Western Conference First Round NBA Playoffs at Frost Bank Center on April 19, 2026 in San Antonio, Texas.

Seixas relishes 'steep' challenge at Fleche Wallonne

Verviers, Belgium

French teenager Paul Seixas says he is eager to face the challenge of the decisive climb that often settles Wednesday's Fleche Wallonne classic.

The 19-year-old has underlined his immense potential with a breakout season, riding beyond expectations to win the Tour of the Basque Country, highlighted by landmark performances in both the time trial and mountain stages.

On Wednesday, he will measure his progress on the type of short, sharp climb that can either win a classic or gain major traction on a three-week Grand Tour. In this case, it is the feared Mur de Huy.

Last year, Tadej Pogacar left Tom Pidcock and Kev



Overall race leader Team Decathlon CMA CGM's French rider Paul Seixas celebrates winning the 2026 Basque Country's Itzulia cycling tour after the sixth and last stage, in Bergara, on April 11, 2026.

in Vauquelin trailing in his wake on the final climb of the Mur de Huy, a 1.3km ascent at an average 10 per cent incline with a section at 17 per cent in the final

100m.

Dane Mattias Skjelmose, Seixas, Vauquelin and a third Frenchman Romain Gregoire will be the men to watch, with Pogacar and

Remco Evenepoel absent as they rest up for Sunday's Liege-Bastogne-Liege.

Seixas wouldn't take the bait of favourite tag.

"I'm here to test myself on this kind of terrain, and I've never gone up against the specialists before," he said. "I know I'm quite good at it, but I don't feel obliged to win here."

He said something similar before winning three stages and every jersey on offer at the Tour of the Basque Country.

"Obviously I've seen it on television but on the training ride I saw just how steep it is, really steep."

Seixas suggested it might be easier for him to win by a long-range attack and that the weather would play a role in the 200km

race with 11 climbs.

He also promised to give Pogacar and Evenepoel a run for their money at Liege-Bastogne-Liege this weekend.

"I never set off thinking second place would be alright. I'm one of the riders who can challenge them, but we'll see about that as the race unfolds," he said. Bernard Hinault was the last Frenchman to win at Liege in 1980.

"After Liege, we'll make a decision on the Tour de France," said Seixas, who has never tackled a senior 21-day race and is instead thought to be lined up to cut his teeth at the Vuelta a Espana.

Hinault was also the last Frenchman to win the Tour de France, in 1985. □

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Venus Williams exits in first round of Madrid Open

Madrid, Spain

Venus Williams was knocked out of the Madrid Open in the first round on Tuesday as the 45-year-old went down in straight sets to Kaitlin Quevedo.

The 20-year-old Spanish wild card beat the seven-time Grand Slam champion 6-2, 6-4. Ranked 479th in the world, Williams has now lost all seven matches she has played this season. It was her first match on clay since Roland Garros five years ago.

Every game was closely contested in a first set marked by numerous unforced errors due to the wind blowing across the Estadio Manolo Santana but the world number 140, playing in her first 1000-level event, was the more consistent of the two.

Williams got off to a better start in the second set, taking a 3-0 lead, before Quevedo began to fight back and the match was then interrupted by rain while the roof over the centre court was closed.



Venus Williams returns a shot against Francesca Jones of Great Britain during Day 3 of the Miami Open at Hard Rock Stadium on March 19, 2026 in Miami Gardens, Florida.

Quevedo won five consecutive games to seal her passage to the second round.

Last year's French Open sensation Lois Boisson lost 6-1, 6-3 to American Peyton Stearns in just over an hour on her return from injury.

Boisson, who lit up Roland Garros with her stunning run to the semi-finals as the world number 361, won only four games in her first match since September. □